

SHAPE YOUR FUTURE

Life is attitude. The attitudes you bring (or don't bring) to your circumstances will affect your future more than your talent, looks, or intelligence. They will shape your destiny more than your plans, your friends, or your enemies. They are more critical than your genes or your upbringing. They will fashion your prospects more than luck or even hard work ever could. They color and influence everything you do and gradually create the circumstances—whether good or bad—under which you must live and labor. Indeed, they are so important that I call them *Megatudes*.

Every day your attitudes either sweeten or poison all that flows through you and from you. By harnessing the power of the twelve *Megatudes* revealed in this book you will improve your circumstances, your career, your income, your relationships, and your happiness. Miss out on a few, and you will sentence yourself to mediocrity. Neglect them all and you are doomed to failure. But when you consciously build all twelve of them into your thought processes and behaviors, your life will change direction and set you on a course for all of the good things that life has to offer!



BILLY RIGGS has been called "The Dr. Phil of Magic," and is America's source for all things attitude! Through books, recordings, and live keynote speeches Billy uses an unusual blend of comedy, music, magic, and motivation to spread his positive attitude to millions of people on five continents. A spellbinding communicator, Mr. Riggs honed his uplifting message and speaking skills in the pulpit, founding one of America's fastest-growing churches at the age of 29. Though his presentations now are secular, audiences sometimes sense the old preacher in him, stirred by his sincerity and power on the platform. In 2002, Mr. Riggs was presented the highest earned award of the National Speakers Association: the Certified Speaking Professional, or CSP. Since 1995, he has breathed **The Magic of Attitude** into people, companies, and organizations.

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MEGATUDES

RIGGS



BILLY RIGGS

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—TWELVE—

CRITICAL ATTITUDES THAT
WILL SHAPE YOUR FUTURE

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Megatudes
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Will Shape Your Future

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Introduction

Attitude is everything. Attitude lies at the core of a happy and productive life. There is no situation so dreadful that a proper attitude will not soften the blow. There is no circumstance so pleasant that a bad one cannot rob it of its luster, or even spoil it. In my thirties, I decided to become a recreational pilot. Just for the fun of it, I took lessons and began flying a small Cessna 152 out of and around my hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina. As I learned to fly, my instructor properly indoctrinated me with the skills, knowledge and terminology necessary to safely command an aircraft. Of particular interest to me was an aviator's peculiar use of the word "attitude." To a pilot, the term has a very narrow meaning, and it has nothing to do with his or her disposition. Attitude, to a flier, refers to the plane's angle of attack, the trajectory at which an aircraft approaches the horizon, and there are only three possible attitudes an airplane can have:

- 1) Nose up—which usually means the aircraft is climbing,

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- 2) Straight and level—neither climbing nor descending, and
- 3) Nose down—which is the normal configuration for descent.

In aviation, therefore, it's not just a cliché; your attitude *really does* determine (or at least heavily influence) your altitude. Similarly, outside the cockpit, it is the manner in which you approach your circumstances, rather than the nature of the circumstances themselves that dictates the heights to which you might climb or the depths to which you will fall. It is your attitude, your angle of attack, your interpretation and vantage point that makes all the difference. Only a small percentage of life is about what happens to you. It is overwhelmingly about how you *view, approach and respond* to what happens to you.

There are about a dozen attitudes that are critical to a balanced, happy, and productive life. They are so important that I call them *Megatudes*. A person who embodies them all has chosen a trajectory that will ultimately bring him the fulfillment for which all human beings yearn. Exhibit only a few of them and you will miss out on much of the joy you might otherwise have known. Reject them all, and you have doomed yourself to a bitter, lonely, and empty existence, and have set your one-and-only life on a course for misery. Whatever your current path may be, you have chosen it for yourself in the attitudes you embrace. The road to change begins with a transformation of your attitude. But it is a toll road, and admission is gained only by your earnest decision to infuse your heart, mind, and behavior with life's twelve Megatudes.

Chapter I

The Well of the Mind

Happiness and success, the crown jewels of life, are universally sought for ourselves and envied in others. But these twin gems are not bestowed by fate or luck. Nor are they often the result of happenstance. They are not even a divine gift. Rather, they are drawn from the well of each person's *own mind*. The attitudes stored there comprise the source from which all of life streams. Thus, if your well is poisoned, the water removed from it will be bitter to you and toxic to others. But if the well is untainted, everything that flows from it will be pure, refreshing, and restorative. This is the fundamental principle of life. If you miss this, then you will miss out on most of the wonderful things life has to offer.

In my youth I heard an old Baptist preacher named Vance Havner voice one of his favorite sayings: "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket." Stated another

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way, whatever is deep inside your mind will eventually find expression in your words and deeds which will, over the years, create a life that is gradually becoming more desirable or depressing. A pessimistic view of life lodged in the recesses of your mind exerts a relentless gravitational pull on your career, your relationships, and your spirit. Like a millstone around your neck, it makes every task harder and prevents you from realizing your potential in life. A victim mentality hidden in the crevices of your brain inevitably oozes out through your hands, feet, and mouth, affects your choices, and paralyzes your potential. The effect of this negativity functions much like the HIV virus. It is not the infection itself that kills you, but the weakening effect it has on your entire system, leaving you vulnerable to setbacks that otherwise might not be considered serious, let alone fatal. Those with a polluted well have thus rendered themselves helpless in the face of minor setbacks, obstacles, and challenges. Decade after decade, the many thousands of poor decisions made in response to misguided attitudes accumulate like so many snowflakes into monstrous drifts of sorrow and regret. But a positive outlook on life and a wholesale acceptance of personal responsibility for your actions *and their consequences* will similarly produce behaviors that predictably result in success and happiness. The proper maintenance of your well holds the key to fulfillment.

The preacher's axiom was true, but so is its unavoidable corollary: "Whatever comes up in the bucket reveals what is down in your well." If you wish to know the contents of your subconscious mind, you need look no further than your own behavior. Your actions are a strong indicator of the contents of your mind. Before continuing your reading of this book, it is essential that you take a long look in your "bucket."

The Well of the Mind

Examine your life. Are you happy? Are your relationships deep and meaningful? Are you successful? If your answer to any of these questions is “no” or a qualified “yes,” then you are missing at least one of life’s twelve “Megatudes,” the all-important attitudes that shape destinies. You must resist the temptation to blame others for your plight. Refuse to give in to the notion that success is unattainable due to circumstances beyond your control or that happiness is out of your reach because fate dealt you a lousy hand. Just *look* in your bucket. What you see reflected back to you in the water’s surface will almost perfectly match the contents of your well, your mind. The problem rests there and perhaps nowhere else.

For this reason, the key to improving your life situation lies within the confines of your own skull. The polluted waters that seep relentlessly into your relationships must be purified. The steady drip, drip, drip of negativity that erodes your motivation must be shut off at the source. The muddy waters that cloud your judgment and color your view of the world must be cleansed. The nagging voices (from within and without) that dam up your potential must be silenced or ignored. Once the source is decontaminated, the new, pure flow will slowly fill your spirit and then overflow into the world around you. The mighty oak tree of your dreams must be fed from the waters of your well; the purer the water, the more majestic the tree.

The groundbreaking American psychologist and philosopher, William James, once said: “The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.” Amazingly, Dr. James said that *more than one hundred years ago!* Therefore, the greatest failure of this current generation is that more than a

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century after this earth-shattering discovery was made most people still haven't accepted the reality of it. By comparison, the automobile is about 115 years old, and it was in widespread use in a matter of decades. The airplane was invented in 1903, and now everyone takes air travel for granted. About that same time, the existence of the germ was demonstrated to be the cause of contagious diseases; no one doubts this. The computer is only a few decades old, yet almost everyone uses one. The Internet and cellular phones were only invented recently, and today we can't live without them. iPads didn't exist a decade ago, yet now we are surrounded by them. Why, then, have we proven to be so resistant to the fact that attitude profoundly affects life? Ironically, it is because the human "well" is contaminated with a bias to believe that attitude matters little.

The psychologically healthy person ruthlessly disciplines himself to cling to the belief that "your attitude determines your altitude." Without such determination, this essential belief will slip from your grasp, because it is the natural state of the human mind to blame all of life's ills on circumstances that are beyond our control. In this way, a self-defeating belief system is born in which outside circumstances drag us into failure, and then provide an all too convenient excuse for laziness and failure. Those who fail often do so because they believed success was impossible due to outside factors. This victim mentality robs us of our motivation, for why bother to play the game if the deck is stacked against us and the outcome is already determined? The result of this poisonous belief system is *inaction*, which not only causes failure but, in turn, becomes the excuse for further inaction. Like an airplane without power, the man with the poisoned

well begins a slow downward death spiral with a predictable and painful result.

It is far easier to fail and then blame outside factors than it is to discipline ourselves to work hard, taking full responsibility for our actions (even actions taken by other people that affect us) and their consequences. But the mental strain of cleaning and maintaining our mental well, while more difficult in the short term, pays huge dividends in the distant future. It produces a better you and brighter fortunes. Therefore, a choice is to be made and it is one of cosmic proportions for you and for your future. It is *not* a choice between pain and ease, for the human experience provides no options that are free from pain. The question is never whether to endure pain or avoid it. Rather, it is the choice between the short-term pain of self-control and the long-term one of disappointment. Which pain will you choose to endure, the self-inflicted discomfort of discipline (which tends to decrease over time), or the ever-growing sting of regret?

Discipline and discomfort are inextricably bundled together. Discipline means getting out of bed when you'd rather sleep in, working when you'd rather watch TV, exercising when you want to catch a movie, drinking coffee and pressing on when you're tempted to take a nap, eating fruit when you crave doughnuts. All of these bring discomfort. But it is the *lack* of discipline that causes the greater distress, for the man who chooses the easier path in the short term has sentenced himself to even greater pain in the long one. The woman who chose to sleep late, eat fatty foods, and take it easy will spend her entire life playing "would-a, could-a, should-a." The individual who cannot or will not master himself is doomed to mediocrity or worse. He or she will

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live out the “golden years” thinking “if only I had worked harder,” “if only I had quit smoking sooner,” “if only I had pursued my goals more vigorously,” “if only I had acted on that idea when I had it.” As John Greenleaf Whittier wrote: “For all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these: ‘it might have been.’” The bad things we have done can be forgiven, and regrets for them can usually be forgotten and left in the past. But the regret for those opportunities passed up, those dreams not pursued, those chances not taken lingers and festers over the passing years as the consequences of inaction become more and more apparent, and the gap between what we are and what we could have been widens.

Your ability to take the crucial step of disciplining yourself consistently is profoundly affected—if not completely determined—by your state of mind. If the waters of pessimism flow freely from your well, you will be unable to motivate yourself to take the difficult steps necessary to succeed. When your alarm clock sounds before dawn, signaling your need to bound from bed and pursue your dreams, the voice of cynicism will echo from the depths of the well to dampen your enthusiasm: “What’s the use? Why should I get up early and try my hardest? It’s not going to make any difference anyway. I might as well just stay right here in bed. If I’m going to be a failure, I might as well be a warm, well-rested one. Better to be a relaxed loser than a stressed-out one.” When the plate of cupcakes is passed before you, your willpower to resist temptation will be weakened by the voice from your well: “I’ve been overweight for years. That’s never going to change. I know I’ll just gain a little weight every year for the rest of my life, so why torture myself? If I’m going to be fat anyway, I’m darn well going to enjoy myself getting there!” If, on the other hand, the voice from the well

is an encouraging one, your willpower will be strengthened: “The future is bright, and it is largely under my control. The quality of life I live will be determined by the decisions I make and the actions I take. I can do anything I set my mind to. What I do today will positively impact my life and bring me closer to fulfilling my goals and dreams.” The key to drawing success and happiness from your “bucket” lies in your ability to transform the contents of your well.

It is one of life’s most formidable challenges that the water in your well, left untended, gradually becomes dirtier, not cleaner. The Second Law of Thermodynamics works as unfailingly on the human mind as it does on the physical world: everything tends to move from a state of order to one of disorder. A home that is not routinely cleaned and straightened will slowly, inexorably become messier. Even though you may toil until your home is spotless, the moment you stop cleaning the process toward disarray immediately begins again. The longer you wait between house cleanings, the greater the task will become. A body that is not regularly bathed will gradually attract dirt, germs and odors. But a thorough shower does not stop the progression; it merely interrupts it and sets it back a few hours. The moment you step out of the tub it begins anew. Just as your home and your body must be routinely cleaned, the water in your well must be continually filtered and purified.

The task of correctly maintaining your well is similar to that of the proper care of a swimming pool. If a pool owner does not monitor the quality of the water and maintain it on a regular basis, it will become murky and the sides of the pool will feel slimy. Leaves will float on the surface or cover the bottom. The pH balance will become too high or too low, which causes swimmers’ skin to itch or the pumps

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to deteriorate. The filter will become clogged with debris and the water will emit a faint odor. If the owner were to leave the country for a year, on his return the pool would be filled with algae, dirt, and bacteria. The clean-up job would be enormous. Similarly, the contents of your mental well, if left unchecked, will not remain static. They will slide relentlessly into negativity, pessimism, and cynicism. Unless you take specific steps to avoid this, the compounded effect of years of neglecting your well will be failure, bitterness, and resignation. Just as you set aside time to bathe your body and tidy your home you must regularly schedule activities that *cleanse your thoughts*. But first, you need to analyze the contents of the well, itself.

The proper analysis of your well water comes easily: you need merely to monitor your self-talk, the words that you whisper under your breath or say silently in your mind about yourself and the world. “*I’m so stupid.*” “*Why can’t I do anything right?*” “*I am such a loser!*” “*Nobody wants to be my friend.*” “*Why should I bother working harder? It won’t change anything.*” More often, the message is not even put into words; it is merely a feeling, whether of dread, helplessness, or underconfidence. What messages are you hearing or feeling? What does your inner voice say? Is the message positive or negative? Is it helpful or unhelpful? Chances are, unless you have been deliberately planting good thoughts in your subconscious mind, the messages are overwhelmingly negative. Most people spend a lifetime bombarding themselves with self-defeating messages. No one taught them to be negative or pessimistic; that comes naturally, making it quite challenging for the average person to remain upbeat and confident. It is hard work, though profoundly rewarding, to transform yourself into a person

who is positive and upbeat. Just as an untended garden is inevitably invaded and overtaken by weeds, your unguarded mind will unavoidably be overrun by negativity. Only strenuous, regular, relentless hoeing, weeding, and planting will produce the harvest you desire. There is a transition that must be made. You must progress from “Negatudes,” through and beyond “Metatudes,” and arrive at the pinnacle of healthy mental living: *Megatudes*.

THE NEGATUDE: I CAN'T

Not all self-talk is necessarily damaging. There are at least four types of self-talk statements:

- 1) I can't,
- 2) I shouldn't,
- 3) I won't, and
- 4) I am.

The first two are harmful and the remaining two are beneficial. The most destructive kind of self-talk is the “I can't” or “I don't” statement. “I can't succeed.” “I can't make enough money to pay these bills.” “I can't lose weight.” “I don't have what it takes.” “I don't have the talent for that.” “I don't have the motivation to achieve my dreams.” Regrettably, not only are these the most damaging statements you can utter to yourself, they are also the most common. They flow effortlessly into and through our minds, strewing the debris of doubt throughout the psyche and undermining confidence. Unless their flow is reduced or redirected, they will cut well-worn ruts in your brain, and with each passing year the ruts will widen and deepen to channel even more potent currents, all emptying into the same stagnant pool of hopelessness.

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There are two other types of self-talk that represent a reduction in self-inflicted harm, but still fall short of the ideal. Call them Metatudes if you like, intermediate stages in the metamorphosis of your well. Consider them transitional links in the evolutionary chain that leads to and culminates in full-blown self-actualization. Stopping at one of these waypoints will maroon you in an existence that falls short of the ultimate fulfillment you seek. Metaphorically, these next two “halfway houses” are tantamount to crawling on your belly like a lizard or walking on your hind feet and knuckles like an ape rather than standing erect and striding on two feet as a human being can and should. The first middle-of-the-road stage is the weaker of the two.

METATUDE I: I SHOULDN'T

Still damaging, but less obviously so than the “I can’t” message, is the “I shouldn’t” or “I should” statement. “*I shouldn’t eat this.*” “*I should exercise today.*” “*I should get up early and get a head start on my work.*” “*I really shouldn’t go out tonight; I have an early class tomorrow.*” “*I should do my homework first.*” On the surface, these statements seem like a positive step. In reality, they merely conceal the unspoken end of the sentence, the part that starts with “but.” For example, a woman who has been dieting for three weeks is invited by a friend to join her friends at a Mexican restaurant. She replies, “I really shouldn’t do this....” The friend instantly knows that the answer is yes, just a reluctant, guilt-ridden acquiescence instead of an enthusiastic endorsement of the plan. “I shouldn’t eat this,” if the thought were fully completed, would read, “I shouldn’t eat this, but I’m going to anyway.” The self-talk is still one of resignation to failure. Much stronger is the “I won’t” statement.

METATUDE II: I WON'T

"I won't" (or "I will") statements represent a volitional commitment to follow a particular path. This type of inner declaration leaves no doubt. There are no hidden meanings, concealed predicates, or unspoken escape clauses. There is no wiggle room in the "I won't" statement. When the invitation to violate the terms of the diet arises, the woman no longer replies, "I shouldn't (implying she probably will, anyway)...." Instead she responds, "Thank you for the invitation, but I won't put myself in that situation." The high school student states, "I will do my homework first, then go play basketball afterwards." The reformed sloth emphatically says to himself, "I will exercise today at 10:00 a.m., *period*." The college freshman vows silently to herself, "I will be in bed by 11:00 p.m. so I'll feel rested for my test tomorrow morning." The most powerful statement of all, however, is the "I am" statement.

THE MEGATUDE: I AM

When you choose the "I am" statement, you have moved beyond the realm of simply controlling your behavior to establishing and reinforcing your identity. Notice the spectrum of self-talk proclamations as they progress from victimization to (reluctant) surrender to determination to character:

Negatude	Victimization	<i>"I can't stop eating sweets"</i>
Metatude I	Surrender	<i>"I shouldn't keep eating sweets."</i>
Metatude II	Determination	<i>"I won't eat any sweets today."</i>
Megatude	Character	<i>"I am a healthy eater."</i>

Once I begin to see myself, by very nature, as a healthy eater rather than someone with the mere willpower to

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deny myself the pleasure of dessert now and then, saying no becomes your natural response. I am no longer one who drags his body to the gym and forces himself to exercise; to the contrary, I am a body-builder! I am not one who resists the temptation to smoke; I am a non-smoker. I am not simply one who disciplines himself to study; I am a model student. Once you make it a habit to use *I am* statements, you begin to shape your self-image, and self-image is destiny. However, if you are—like most people—in the habit of using self-defeating statements, there are three steps necessary for the purification of your well.

1) GUARD AGAINST BAD INPUT

A swimming pool, in the off-season, is sometimes covered to prevent trash from blowing into it. Each autumn, leaves fall on that cover. Swirling winds sometimes blow dust and litter on it. It is impossible to prevent the rubbish of the world from coming in contact with the pool, but that is not a major concern when the cover is there to do its job. Waste that brushes across the cover is not to be feared. It is only that which enters the water that causes problems. It is similarly impossible to keep negative influences from swirling around us, or to prevent the acid rain of criticism from occasionally catching us in a downpour. But as the keeper of your well, it is imperative that you prevent such input from going any farther than skin deep. As the saying goes, “You can’t stop birds from flying overhead, but you *can* keep them from building a nest in your hair.”

Negativity will seep into your soul unless it is rejected outright. The human brain behaves like a dry sponge when it is exposed to pessimism and hopelessness, eagerly soaking it up. Uplifting, encouraging messages, however, tend to be

less readily absorbed. It might take months or years for the brain to internalize a positive thought and accept it as reality. This natural receptivity to harmful thoughts and resistance to helpful ones demands that you constantly remain vigilant about controlling what goes into your brain. Like milk, which descends gradually but steadily toward spoilage the moment it is opened, your brain will tend toward doom and gloom unless you diligently protect it from life's souring influences. Because negative thoughts are much more quickly absorbed than positive ones, great care must be taken to keep the negative thoughts away from your "sponge" long enough for the positive ones to lodge there. But how is this accomplished?

When discouraging words are spoken by others or wander unsolicited through your mind, you must respond with an instant and non-negotiable rebuttal, moving quickly to positive thoughts and solutions. In what amounts to a game of mental "hot potato," the *moment* you recognize a thought as being cynical or pessimistic or harmful, you must instantly reject it. If you dwell on these thoughts, your subconscious mind will welcome them and internalize them; they will set like concrete and transform themselves from mere passing thoughts into an intransigent world view. You will gradually begin to see all of existence through the lens of negativism, hopelessness, and helplessness, and your behavior will reflect this. But if you stubbornly refuse to listen to the discouraging voices, the positive ones will slowly replace them.

2) PURIFY THE CONTENTS OF YOUR WELL

The filters in a swimming pool continually cycle the water to remove contaminants that managed to get into it despite the presence of the cover. When the filter is running, impure water is removed and slowly replaced by clean. Similarly,

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your mind has, over the years, accumulated the debris of destructive beliefs and the scum of low expectations. But the filters you'll need to extract these negative influences from your brain do not function automatically. Rather, they must be set in motion as an act of your will and imposed on your mind continually. The unhelpful beliefs you harbor in your mind must be slowly eroded by the strong, steady flow of positive thoughts through your consciousness. Like a cult member who must be deprogrammed via many hours of being hammered by truth, you must flood your brain with uplifting and positive messages.

In order to reprogram your subconscious mind, you must discipline yourself to immediately replace every disheartening statement delivered by your self-talk with an accurate statement. Though most of the self-defeating messages housed in your psyche are gross exaggerations, each time they are whispered unchallenged by your subconscious mind the message they carry is reinforced. So powerful are these messages that it generally takes about *five positive messages* to overcome just one negative one. If other people are not providing these positive counterbalances, we must work daily to provide them for ourselves. The result is predictable: negative statements become slightly truer of you each time, because they drag down your performance. Just as a man who believes he is ugly actually *becomes* less confident and outgoing, making him less attractive to potential girlfriends, a person who genuinely believes he is a loser will eventually, slowly, almost inevitably become one. This is why it is vital that you challenge these messages vigorously.

Each self-destructive statement must be challenged the moment it emerges from your well. It must be forcefully replaced with an accurate statement. If your inner pessimist

says, “I’m so boring that no one would ever want to be my friend,” you must instantly replace that statement with a more accurate one: “I’m probably not the most interesting person in town, but people far less interesting than me have many loving friends.” When the voice tells you, “I’m just not smart enough to succeed,” substitute the truth: “I’m no Einstein, but plenty of people who are no smarter than I am are succeeding greatly. I just have to apply myself and persevere and I’ll probably succeed, too.” If you hear your inner voice saying, “I’m so ugly no one will ever want to marry me,” respond instantly with this: “Lots of people who are far less attractive than me are married, so I’m actually quite a catch.” This exercise must be performed repeatedly, day after day, until the positive messages overwhelm the detrimental ones.

The words you choose to use to describe your circumstances are important, too. When you refer to a difficult situation in a negative manner, calling it a “problem,” the result is discouragement and frustration. However, if you force yourself to refer to the very same situation as a “challenge,” your central nervous system instantly responds by pumping adrenaline into your bloodstream, summoning your resources, and mustering your courage. Labeling a circumstance as an obstacle is counterproductive; seeing it as a hurdle to be surmounted is exhilarating! Terms like unfair, unjust, breakdown, trouble, failure, setback, predicament, headache, aggravation, and hindrance can similarly drain you of resolve. These must be banished from your internal vocabulary and replaced with their more uplifting equivalents: a call to arms, a dare, an opportunity to prove your mettle, a gut check, a tryout, a contest, the chance to prove yourself, a test of your abilities, the opportunity to

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really earn your paycheck. An adversary has not “threatened” you; he has thrown down the gauntlet. You have been called out, and you must respond with your very best effort. The key to your ultimate success is changing your thinking from negative to positive in every aspect of your life.

3) PROTECT AGAINST FUTURE CONTAMINATION

Finally, in order to keep a pool clear and sparkling and prohibit the growth of bacteria, pool owners add special chemicals to the water from time to time. In the same way, to prevent the regeneration of toxins in your well, you must continually pour helpful content into it. This requires a systematic plan that must be adhered to throughout life. Just as the chemicals must be added every several days for as long as a pool exists, discouragement must be flushed from your well on a consistent basis for as long as you live. If you want to experience a happy and successful life, you must accept this as reality. These are unavoidable realities of human life: you must breathe every few seconds, you must eat every few hours, you must sleep every night and you must *force positive messages into your brain every few days*. There are four means of doing so.

First, you should have a list of motivational books that you plan to read or listen to. Of course, there are the classics that have inspired millions over many decades. Among these are Earl Nightingale’s *The Strangest Secret*. Others are:

As a Man Thinketh
by James Allen

The Magic of Believing
by Claude Bristol

The Well of the Mind

How to Win Friends and Influence People

by Dale Carnegie

Acres of Diamonds

by Russell Conwell

The Richest Man in Babylon

by George S. Clason

Think and Grow Rich

by Napoleon Hill

The Greatest Salesman in the World

by Og Mandino

The Power of Positive Thinking

by Norman Vincent Peale

The Magic of Thinking Big

by David J. Schwartz

The Psychology of Winning

by Dennis Waitley

See You at the Top

by Zig Ziglar

Believe and Achieve

by W. Clement Stone

I recommend that you buy them all and read them regularly, over and over, until their message becomes your own. If you can't afford to buy them, check them out of your public library. Some of these classics are available in an audio format for purchase or download. You should also supplement these classics with other motivational books (like this one) to get a more modern treatment of the subject. Financial guru Dave Ramsey estimates that the average millionaire reads about one non-fiction book each month. It is not any coincidence

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that the rich and successful are almost obsessive about personal development.

Secondly, you should listen regularly to motivational messages. There are literally hundreds (probably thousands) of inspirational speakers who have each produced audio messages that can be purchased in bookstores or over the web. A simple Internet search will yield a banner harvest of such messages for download, on flash drives, or compact discs that will transform your commute to and from work into a master's degree course in success. According to motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, if you want to fully absorb the content of an audio message you must listen to it at least 17 times. As these encouraging words pour forth daily from your car speakers, they will relentlessly attack the negative ones that have made your brain their home for many years.

Thirdly, make it your habit to attend motivational conferences whenever you can squeeze it into your schedule. There are well-known seminars that annually appear in auditoriums in cities all over the U.S. featuring the premiere motivators of our time. Even if you've heard the speakers before, simply bathing yourself for an entire day in positive input has the effect of reprogramming your brain. Each time you hear the messages, you will draw new insights and emphases from them. Motivation is like a meal—it doesn't last very long but is, nonetheless, absolutely essential. You must feed your need for inspiration as regularly as you feed your body's requirement for nourishment. Each time you fill your well with uplifting input, you refresh the water there,

improving the quality of life that you draw from it.

Finally, organize your schedule to stay in constant contact with those people in your life who naturally inspire you. Regrettably, there are those who routinely poison the wells of their friends, relatives, and coworkers with doubts and fears. You must limit your exposure to the toxic waste that is so readily available in the bad attitudes of others. Identify those who drain your energy and sap your motivation, and think of creative ways to shield yourself from their influence. Think of those whose positive demeanor brings a smile to your face and fans the flames of confidence and determination within you. It is people like these who will act as “chlorine for the brain,” overwhelming your fears and doubts with self-assurance, purpose, and resolve.

There are at least twelve specific Megatudes—supremely important attitudes—that will emerge from a properly maintained well, slowly turning your desert-like existence into a fertile and flourishing garden. By studying each of the next twelve chapters you will learn how to recognize these traits in your own life, or note their absence. When you discover one that is missing, you will then be able to identify the types of input that you must avoid or actively seek out to replace the misguided thinking that holds you back. It is a long and arduous task to replace the damaging thought processes infecting your brain, but it is a necessary one for anyone who hopes to live a truly fulfilled life.

EXERCISE: Every morning, say the following words to yourself:

MEGATUDES

*Today is a very important day, because what I do today will change my future. The choices I make today—even the small ones—will either make my life better or they will make it worse, so I will choose wisely. The decisions I make today will either advance my career or damage it; they will improve my relationships or harm them; they will increase my income or decrease it; they will improve my health or undermine it; they will enhance my reputation or soil it; they will strengthen my character or weaken it; they will either sweeten my well or they will contaminate it. Therefore, I will carefully consider how I spend my time today, what I say, how I say it, what I do, with whom I spend my time and what I put in my body. I will plan my day according to my priorities, rather than let it be planned for me by pressures or by the demands of others. I will guard my mind from negativity and pessimism, because whatever I allow to pollute my well will eventually pollute my life. I will flood my mind with positive thoughts and input. I will expect good things to happen. I will face each challenge with calmness, clarity, and a smile. Today is, indeed, a VERY important day.**

*For your convenience, this page is repeated at the end of this book so that you can cut it out and post it where you will see it every day.